

## **Minutes of the Webinar on “Recognizing Pastoralists for their Knowledge, Local Breeds and Biodiversity Conservation” organized by RISG-South Asia on 22nd May, 2021**

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On the occasion of International Day of Biodiversity (22<sup>nd</sup> May, 2021), a Webinar on “Recognizing Pastoralists for their Knowledge, Local Breeds and Biodiversity Conservation” was organized by RISG-SA in association with ICAR-NBAGR, CFP, SEVA and ILSI. It started with a narrative poem on ‘*Bail aur Gai ki prem kahani*’ [‘The sentimental story of pastoral bull and cow’] recited by Bhawana Jaimini.

- Mr. Sajal Kulkarni, facilitator of the event, welcomed all the dignitaries and invited Ms. Natasha Maru and Ms. Rashmi Singh to make a presentation on ‘Pastoralism and Biodiversity’ and set the context for the webinar.
- Natasha Maru, PhD Scholar- University of Sussex & member Comms Team RISG-SA highlighted role of pastoralists in conserving biodiversity at different levels viz. breed, species and ecosystem level, emphasized on the instrumental role of pastoralists towards declaration of International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP).
- Rashmi Singh, PhD scholar - Ambedkar University Delhi & member, Comms Team RISG\_SA, made a presentation titled ‘Advocating Pastoralists’ knowledge and policy participation in Himalayan Conservation’. She shared the findings from her ongoing research in the Eastern and Western Himalaya highlighting the role of pastoralists’ knowledge and their animal grazing in the sustainable management of high-altitude rangelands. She concluded that pastoralists’ participation is critical for the success of both rangeland conservation and pastoral livelihoods.
- Next, Dr. D.K. Sadana, Chair, RISG-South Asia, explained the Breed Saviour Awards (BSA) which were conceived with a vision to create awareness amongst people working at the ground level for conservation of local breeds. Since their inception in 2009, 20 livestock keepers have been awarded each year for conserving native breeds after evaluating the applications based on pre-set criteria. A booklet with the profiles of the awardees was released regularly. Till date, 180 livestock keepers have received BSA for conserving 114 breeds or populations and 26 populations were awarded before they were even registered.
- Mr. Sumer Singh Bhati, a Breed Saviour Awardee for promoting Jaisalmeri breed of camel and himself founder of camel milk producers’ society shared his experiences from the Rajasthan state of India. He also raised alarm bells regarding the lack of availability of grazing lands for his camels and called for scientific as well as ecological solutions to their problems. Another BSA awardee for conserving Osmanabadi goat breed in Maharashtra , Mrs. Bhagyashree Sapate spoke about the land assets she had created

using the income generated by rearing the breed. She informed that she is currently engaged in preparation of value-added products like milk *peda*- a local sweet dish, and goat milk soap using the milk of the local goat breed.

- Dr. B.P. Mishra, Director, ICAR-NBAGR presided over the event. In his presidential address on 'Role of NBAGR in recognizing native AnGR and contribution of livestock keepers', He enlisted the contributions of ICAR-NBAGR in identification, characterization, registration, documentation and conservation of Animal genetic resources (AnGR) and cited Banni breed of buffalo as a success story of the institute.
- NBAGR is also felicitating livestock keepers in the form of Breed conservation award, Breed Saviour Award (in collaboration with SEVA and National Biodiversity Authority - NBA) and certificates to all the applicants for registration of a breed. As far as the *In situ* conservation programme was concerned, population of Krishna Valley cattle, Barbari goat and Kilakarsal sheep had increased and are the achievements of the institute. Finally, he underlined the vision of ICAR-NBAGR for AnGR and livestock keepers for the sustainable conservation of biodiversity.
- Dr. Kamal Kishore and Mr. Vivekanandan (Founder, SEVA) explained the procedure of awardee selection with a presentation - 'How to scout, document, livestock keepers and criteria for selection of awardees'. Dr. Kamal emphasized on the role of NGOs, universities, KVKs, ICAR centers and Dept. of Animal Husbandry in the scouting and documentation of livestock breeders. He also detailed the selection criteria for awarding the local breed keepers. Mr. Vivekanandan further commended the consistent efforts of organizations like NBA, NBAGR, CFP, ILRI and others in ensuring that the BSA award ceremony is an annual event.
- Breed Saviour Awards 2021 were announced by the Chief Guest of the event, Dr. Arjava Sharma (former director, ICAR-NBAGR). The awardees were Mrs. Dahiben Rabari for Marwari sheep breed, Mr. Lobsang Tsewang for Arunachali yak breed and Mr. Tashi for conservation of Nublang cattle of Bhutan. The award comprised of a certificate along with cash prize of INR 10,000.
- A book on "Livestock Keepers' Profile" Breed Saviour Awards 2021 was also released by the Chief Guest. Dr. Sharma stressed on the role of pastoral production systems in maintaining biodiversity as well as ecological balance. He also applauded SEVA and others for selecting all three awardees from pastoralist communities and motivated all to keep the good work going.
- This followed the special lecture by Dr. Mihir Sarkar, Director, ICAR-NRC on the importance of Yak and their importance in food security, poverty eradication and environmental services. He also shed light on the local Arunachali yak breed maintained by Monpa pastoral community and appreciated the efforts of pastoralists like Mr. Lobsang who contributed immensely in conservation and development of the breed.

- A glimpse of Pastoral agriculture in Central Asia was presented by Dr. Hijaba Ykhanbai, Chair, RISG-Central Asia and Mongolia, IYRP. He highlighted the regional strategy as well as priority areas of Central Asian countries and Mongolia for rangeland restoration and management. He also expressed his interest to emulate BSA initiative in Central Asia keeping rangeland and pastureland management as the focus as it occupies about 75% of land area.
- A special lecture was delivered by Mr. Engin Yilmaz, Coordinator, RISG-Europe and Director YOLDA initiative on 'Mobile Pastoralism and Biodiversity'. He presented the ongoing research on the beneficial role of mobile pastoralists in rangeland ecosystems particularly in maintaining connectivity by creating ecological corridors and in contributing to nutrient cycling systems in the rangelands with examples of harmony with wildlife and protecting vultures that thrive on livestock carcass.
- Mr. Vivekanandan concluded the event with the Way Forward which included the key points of documenting profiles of awardees at South Asian level, creating a database on traditional knowledge and innovations of awardees, building linkages with government or institutions for capacity building through nucleus breeding units and developing pastureland and common property resources by pushing for livestock keepers' rights bill submitted by NBAGR/ICAR to Government. He also played a video reflecting the biocultural protocols of different livestock keeping communities and role of community livestock volunteers using herbal preparations for treatment of animals.
- Dr. Sadana, Chair, RISG-SA thanked all the dignitaries for attending the event and opened the house for discussion. This was followed by a word of support from Dr. AKFH Bhuiyan from Bangladesh for IYRP and RISG-SA initiative. Dr. Inam Rahim from Pakistan cautioned about shrinking transhumance corridors, crossing of breeds and lack of pasture rotation practices as some of the obstacles and also endorsed indigenous breeds as climate resilient.

The webinar ended successfully with a vote of thanks and a call for supporting IYRP initiative by Ms. Tatsama Motilal. A total of 77 participants attended the webinar. Recording of the Webinar can be accessed here: [Webinar Recording](#)

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